

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I would like to remind you that the airwaves belong to the public and the current media are not fulfilling their part of the agreement to provide programming that serves the public interest. I want professional, fact-based coverage of current issues that are so important to the ability of the public to understand what is going on around us. The focus of the media must change and you must make certain this happens.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

Susan Steffy
01A Western Overlook
Lamy, NM 87540